

## BANDIT BACKSTOP

# 'Big Willie,' One-Man Dragnet, Does It Again

DEC 6 - 1952

"Big Willie" did it again last night.

"Big Willie" is the name Oakland police affectionally call Special Patrolman William Whitley, whose huge arms have ensnared more than one fleeing bandit.

Last night, at Seventh and Chester Streets, "Big Willie" loomed out of nowhere and stopped Stanley Jackson, 22, of 906 Chestnut Street, as Jackson fled from a gun-waving bartender.

The bartender, Manuel Silva of 1050 Seventh Street, said Jackson, pretending to have a gun in his pocket, attempted to rob his bar at 1052 Seventh

Street. Silva, however, grabbed a gun and Jackson fled.

Silva vaulted the bar and pursued Jackson, but the chase ended a half block away when Jackson ran into — boom — "Big Willie," who stands 6 feet 4, weighs 250 pounds.

Police booked Jackson for investigation of armed robbery.

Another more successful bandit took \$100 at gunpoint from Ray Mitchell, 56, a clerk in a liquor store at 2502 Telegraph Avenue.

A sportily clad bandit, believed to be the same man, walked into a hot dog shop at 4366 Broadway, a while later last night and robbed the clerk, Vernon Genesey of 317 John Street, of \$50.

# 3 Shot, Tavern Man Jailed in Barroom Brawl

A tavern owner is in custody following a scuffle in which a special officer, a dance band drummer and a bystander were wounded by a shotgun blast early today.

The toll of wounded would have been greater, police said, had not a soft drink machine shielded 25 customers from the shower of pellets from the gun.

Held for investigation of assault with a deadly weapon is Henry (Jeff) Allen, 39, of 1442 Auseon Ave., owner of the Lucky Seven Cafe at 395 7th St. where the shooting occurred.

Special officer William "Big Willie" Whitley, a private special patrolman was treated for shotgun pellets in the left leg, which he suffered after he vaulted over the counter and tried to break up the fight.

He was trying to intervene in a scuffle between Allen and Thomas Remerson, 37, of 730 16th St., a drummer in a band playing at a dance room in the cafe. Allen and Remerson were arguing about some money which the drummer allegedly owed Allen, when, police say, Allen grabbed a shotgun in the kitchen.

As they struggled with the gun Whitley, a 6-foot-4 broad shouldered man, vaulted over the counter and tried to separate them.

The 12-gauge double barrel shotgun discharged, firing a blast the length of the counter, hitting a coffee-drinking customer and wounding the drummer and the officer.

The customer, Curtis Scott, 22, of 301 Gramercy Place, an unemployed laborer, refused hospitalization for cheek and lip wounds.

Whitley said that it was the first time in his 13 years as a special patrolman he had been shot.

# 3 Women Beaten On Street

JUL 21 1973

A middle-aged woman and two daughters were beaten yesterday afternoon for several minutes by a man in the middle of Franklin Street in downtown Oakland in full view of many people who walked or drove by without coming to their aid, police reported.

The assaults finally ended, they said, when William (Big Willie) Whitley, a legendary private security guard described by many officers as the "policeman's best friend," was attracted by the women's screams and apprehended the man.

The suspect, identified as Joe C. Pitts, 23, of 3033 82nd Ave., Oakland, was turned over by Whitley to police officers and was booked at the Oakland City Jail for investigation of assault with a deadly weapon and battery.

None of the women was seriously hurt. They were taken to Merritt Hospital, treated for cuts and bruises, and released.

Pitts was in a car occupying parts of two parking spaces on the 2000 block of Franklin at about 4:30 p.m., and the women had driven up and waited for him to pull out so they could pull in, police said.

Pitts refused to pull out, ignoring honks of the horn from the women's car, and finally one of them, Mrs. Paula Jennings, 23, of Oakland, walked to Pitts' car and asked him to move, police said.

He again refused, they apparently exchanged more words, she suddenly turned to return to her car and Pitts jumped out of his and started beating her in the middle of the street, police said.

Mrs. Jennings' sister, Mrs. Gerrilyn Cargile, 28, of Columbus, Ohio, and their mother, Mrs. Cirsten Speer, 55, of Oakland, came to her aid, and by the time they got to her, she was on the pavement, still being beaten, officers said.

The women tried to pull Pitts off Mrs. Jennings, said police, but he hit Mrs. Cargile in the face, grabbed her mother and hit her in the face, and she fell to the ground unconscious.

A witness on the 10th floor of the Bermuda Building nearby called police, and arriving patrolmen took custody of Pitts from Whitley, officers said.

# Heroic

NOV 13 1971

William (Big Willie) Whitley, a private guard who has worked hand-in-hand with the Oakland Police Department for many years, was honored last night at a testimonial dinner at the Holiday Inn on Hegenberger Road.

The dinner culminated "Big Willie Day," which had been proclaimed by Vice Mayor Frank Ogawa.

Whitley is described by many officers as the "policemen's best friend." Ogawa's proclamation noted that he has been instrumental in the apprehension of many felons.

He single-handedly captured two armed burglars in a Seventh Street restaurant in 1951 and caught a bank robber at 21st and Broadway in 1966, the proclamation noted. It also cited the aid rendered to two wounded policemen during a West Oakland shootout in 1949.

"Willie Whitley has earned the respect and admiration of his many friends and colleagues over the years by his eagerness and willingness to help make our community a safe one in which to live," Ogawa said.

Now 67, Whitley was born on a small farm near Monroe, La., and moved to Oakland during World War II. He has served as a private guard for many local businesses.



**'SO LONG, WILLIE'**

OCT 19 1973

*Willie*

# Throng at Whitley Funeral

"Big Willie" Whitley got a cop's sendoff yesterday, with uniformed policemen for his honor guard, motorcycle escort and pallbearers.

"So long, Willie," said Inspector J.F. Richardson of the Alameda County District Attorney's Office, at the end of his eulogy for the brawny self-employed security guard who, in the years since World War II, had earned the nickname, "the policeman's best friend."

Hundreds of mourners—friends, relatives, policemen, recipients of Big Willie's muscular aid—filed past the bier where he lay in state, dressed in uniform with his police-type cap atop the coffin.

The cortege from the Clarence Cooper Mortuary, 1580 Fruitvale Ave., to Mountain View Cemetery was some 40 cars long.

"Policemen can tell Big Willie stories by the hour," Inspector Richardson said in his eulogy. "He is inevitably the winner, and they're all true. These stories will continue to be told for years to

come, whenever policemen gather."

Willie Whitley came to Oakland at the end of World War II without a single friend, Richardson said. By November 1971, when the City Council proclaimed "Big Willie Day" and the city fathers held a testimonial dinner in his honor, "he had more friends than any man I've ever known," said Richardson.

Willie Whitley lived by a strict code of ethics and a fierce loyalty, Richardson said. "He absolutely refused to compromise on what he knew was right, and he was a living definition of the word loyalty."

"Some people thought he was never afraid. Big Willie could be afraid, all right, but it wasn't in his being to let fear deter him from what needed doing. Many of us would not be here if it weren't for his presence."

The Big Willie legend may have started in 1949, when he went to the aid of two wounded officers. By 1951, when he single-handedly captured two

armed robbers from a restaurant holdup, it was full-blown. He captured a fleeing bar bandit in 1952, and was wounded by a shotgun blast in 1955 as he was stopping a tavern brawl.

As recently as last July, he pushed through a crowd of immobile bystanders to stop a man beating three women after an argument over a parking space.

Last Sunday, at the age of 69 and following a lengthy illness, Willie Whitley died.

He was a big man—6 feet 2, 250 pounds, hence his nickname—and had he been born 40 years later, Richardson said, he would have been a talented athlete and a wealthy man.

"But he wasn't born 40 years later, didn't become an athlete, and was by no means wealthy," Richardson said. "Nevertheless, he was a living legend, and will continue to be a legend for a hundred years. His passing leaves a huge void and we'll all miss him."

"So long, Willie."

# 'Big Willie' Whitely, Security Guard, Dies

OCT 15 1973

The Oakland Police Department lost a good friend yesterday with the death of William (Big Willie) Whitely, a legendary private security guard. He was 69 and had been ill for some time.

A self-employed guard for many local businesses, Big Willie, so named because he stood 6 feet 4 and weighed 250 pounds, worked for more than 30 years with the Oakland force and more than once

singlehandedly captured a fleeing suspect.

In July of this year Big Willie apprehended a man who had been beating three women on a downtown street while other people just stood by.

By himself he captured two armed burglars in a West Oakland restaurant in 1951 and caught a bank robber at 21st Street and Broadway in 1966. He also aided two wounded policemen during a 1949 West Oakland shootout.

The announcement of his death was made at all shift changes at the department yesterday Big Willie knew most by their first names and they in turn were thankful for his presence when they were involved in difficult situations.

Vice Mayor Frank Ogawa said at the dinner, "Willie Whitely has earned the respect and admiration of his many friends and colleagues over the years by his willingness to help make our community a safe one in which to live."

He is survived by his wife, Minnie; a son, Willie Robert; a stepdaughter, Jean Berrow; two brothers, James and Green; two sisters, Mrs. Bessie Woods and Mrs. Elizabeth Davenport; and two grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, 1 p.m., in the Clarence Cooper Mortuary chapel, 1580 Fruitvale Ave.